–2–

<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>:

Please cancel claims 9, 10, and 13-20 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 1, 6-8, and 22 as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for managing configuration data, the method comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of configuration values in a hierarchical tree having a plurality of nodes, a defined structure, and defined data types for the stored configuration values, wherein the plurality of nodes includes at least one inner node and at least one child node that is associated with the inner node, wherein <u>at least one configuration value is stored in</u> each node <u>of the plurality of nodes</u> ~~is associated with at least one of the configuration values~~, and each of the configuration values dictates how an application component associated with that configuration value at least one of behaves and interacts with other application components, and wherein some of the nodes ~~are~~ only ~~associated with comprise~~ <u>store</u> a set of configuration values while other of the nodes ~~are associated with~~ <u>store</u> a combination of a set of configuration values and an identifier associated with at least one application component;

registering at least one application component directly with at least one of the nodes of the tree, based on at least one query received from the at least one application component<u>, wherein the at least one node comprises at least one configuration value that dictates how the application component at least one of behaves with and interacts with other application components</u>; and

directly notifying the at least one application component when a configuration value ~~associated with~~ <u>stored in</u> the at least one node is modified, based on an addition or change in at least one configuration value that matches the at least one query.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one query depends on at least one of a location of a configuration value in the tree and a data type of a configuration value.

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one application component comprises a plurality of components of an email application.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a node further includes a reference to at least one node.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the notifying step comprises:

modifying at least one configuration value that is associated with the at least one node with which the at least one application component is registered;

storing in the hierarchical tree the configuration value that was modified, the configuration value being stored at the at least one node with which the at least one application component is registered; and

directly notifying the at least one application component that the configuration value was modified.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of directly supplying the configuration value that was modified to the at least one application component.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of directly supplying at least one of the configuration values stored in the hierarchical tree to the at least one application component.

9-20.   (Canceled)

21.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of configuration values in the hierarchical tree includes all of the configuration data values that are required by the at least one application component.

22.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein registering at least one application component further comprises:

directly registering the at least one application component directly with the at least one inner node.

23.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein directly notifying the at least one application component further comprises,

directly notifying the at least one application component when at least one configuration value associated with at least one of the inner node and the child node associated with the inner node is modified, based on an addition or change in the at least one configuration value.

24.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one configuration value in the plurality of configuration values that is associated with a first application component overlaps with another configuration value in the plurality of configuration values that is associated with a second application component, wherein the at least one configuration value and the another configuration value are nested under a common sub-tree in the tree.